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ABSTRACT

Projects such as Education North, a pilot project for community involvement in education conducted by the Alberta government, can be successful in geographically and culturally isolated communities where social, cultural, and political conflicts affect education. Between 1979 and 1982, Education North operated local education societies in six northern Alberta communities in an attempt to improve school-community relations, improve education, and increase community involvement in educational decision-making. The moderately successful program is only one of several possible strategies for building school-community relationships. Strategies vary in their relation to the formal education system, their focus on programs or projects, and their external control; and all have advantages and disadvantages. Possible strategies include community schools, which serve people of all ages; local control of education, in which all educational decisions are made by the local community; curriculum development resource centers, which bridge the gap between the community and the imported curriculum; consulting and facilitating, in which the superordinate organization provides consultants; community development, in which goals are achieved by the group; and adult education, which rectifies educational inequalities. The strategy selected for a particular community should closely match the community type. (SB)

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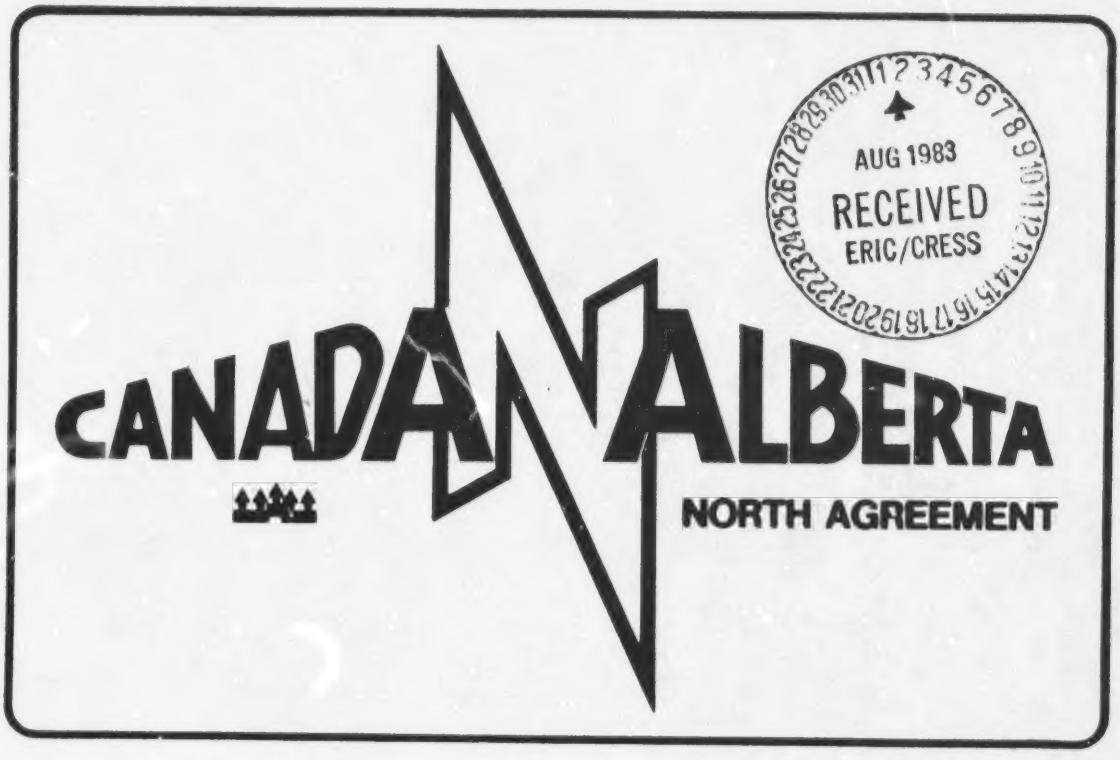

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EDUCATION NORTH
EVALUATION
(1978 - 1982)
and
ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS
SOURCE BOOK

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Education North Evaluation

(1978 - 1982)

and

Alternative Programs

Sourcebook

Summary

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The publications, The Education North Evaluation Project Final Report and Building School-Community Relationships in Northern Communities, have been printed in limited quantities. Copies have been forwarded to: Superintendents in the Northern part of the province, (North of Highway 16), Regional Offices of Education, University Libraries, ERIC Document Services and Micromedia.

Copies of this summary are available on request from Alberta Education, Devonian Building, 11160 Jasper Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta T5K 0L2. Phone (403) 427-2991.

PREFACE

This summary highlights the major points made in two 1982 documents written by E. J. Ingram and R. G. McIntosh of the University of Alberta, Department of Educational Administration. These publications are The Education North Evaluation Project Final Report and a policy development source book entitled Building School-Community Relationships in Northern Communities.*

Education North, a pilot project conducted by the Alberta government in selected northern communities, and funded jointly by the Alberta government and the federal Department of Regional and Economic Expansion, was directed at improving school-community relationships and increasing community involvement in decision-making about educational programs. The basic premise of this project was that achievement of these goals would likely promote higher student achievement levels and better attitudes towards the school systems and education in general (among both children and adults). The Education North project was judged by the project evaluators to have been as successful as could have been expected given the relatively short period of implementation.

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*The evaluation report is principally a narrative description of the project's development and operation, followed by the evaluators' conclusions about the project's success. The source book describes and discusses the merits of various strategies for building school-community relationships, including the local education society strategy employed by Education North.

Education North employed a strategy called the "local education society". Professors Ingram and McIntosh identified six other strategies which have been used for similar purposes in various places in North America.

This summary briefly describes the various social/educational problems experienced in northern communities of Alberta, presents possible solutions such as the Education North project and alternative strategies, and shows how the type of strategy chosen might be matched with the nature of the community.

Recommendations for Ongoing Policy and Program

The evaluators (Ingram and McIntosh) stated that in view of their conclusion that the Education North project had been moderately successful it would be both feasible and appropriate for the provincial government to establish an ongoing program. Such a program would have parameters and objectives similar to those of Education North but would have a broader scope, in keeping with the diversity of northern communities, and would allow for some choice from among several possible alternative strategies. The evaluators recommended guidelines for the development of such a program on the basis of the evaluation of the Education North project, the findings of similar projects as reported in the literature, theory and research on social and organizational development, and the literature on policy and program development.

These guidelines state that the overall goal of the proposed program should be to develop an educational system having the following characteristics: sensitivity and responsiveness to the needs and opportunities in the community, involvement of adults in the educational program, increased relevance of education to its clients and general improvement of the quality of the educational experiences of both children and adults. The objectives of the provincial program would be to pursue this goal by funding and supporting local programs directed towards adult involvement and participation in educational programs, and increasing the development and use of community resources in educational programs. Further details on the recommended guidelines appear at the end of this summary.

A. COMMUNITIES OF NORTHERN ALBERTA - THE SOCIAL, CULTURAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Northern Alberta is a vast, sparsely populated region. Some of its small communities are so remote that they are accessible only by charter aircraft. The population includes Native, Metis and white people, many of whom are experiencing such problems as unemployment, inadequate housing, malnutrition, ill health, drug abuse and alcoholism. Some of the young people try to find a better life in Alberta's urban areas, but they frequently have difficulty adjusting to the very different environment. Many people in these communities have a feeling of powerlessness and tend to become alienated and apathetic.

These problems are further exacerbated by the cultural gaps between Natives and whites. Although the two groups have a great deal in common (many of them are coping with poverty and isolation, for example), they also have widely diverging value systems. For example, their expectations of schools tend to be quite different. For some, education is preparation for employment or for life. For others, particularly Natives and ethnic groups such as the French, it is preservation of culture and language. Many whites believe that education should promote integration of ethnic groups into the dominant culture. The dominant white culture

has imposed its structures and procedures on the traditional lifestyles and political systems of the Natives, and this course of action has had some undesirable results.

These cultural differences are impossible to ignore, since the communities are so small that people must live and work in close proximity. The differences tend to become political as the groups find themselves competing for power (in local governments) and money (government funds). Generally the whites come out on top, but in the past decade Native organizations have begun to increase their power and influence, especially where the whites are itinerant seasonal workers or professionals such as educators and health care workers, who also tend not to stay in a community for extended periods of time.

These problems and difficulties naturally become quite evident in the schools. The students have backgrounds and aspirations which differ markedly from those of the average white urban child (for whom the Alberta curriculum has been designed). The children find that schooling is irrelevant and either drop out of school or attend irregularly. This lack of interest in school, combined with language barriers in the case of Native students, results in poor student achievement levels and widespread illiteracy.

Similarly, parents tend not to support the schools when they do not understand the objectives of the educational program. Further, Native parents have often felt that the schools were assimilating their children into the white society and thus taking them away from their parents. The

negative cycle continues in that educators, many of whom are from outside and often cannot relate to the ways of the community, frequently become discouraged because both parents and students fail to support and participate in the school's activities.

In response to problems such as these in the schools of northern Alberta, provincial authorities have employed the local education society strategy (Education North). Using "community development" concepts, the Education North project tries to increase the involvement and participation of community members in their own affairs (for example, educational decision making). Under the leadership of a central agency (the provincial government), community members are encouraged to learn participation skills and at the same time bring their influence to bear on school programs.

The basic approach described in this summary is a positive one. Instead of focussing on problems such as truancy or illiteracy, all of the suggested strategies provide opportunities to develop and build on the good things which exist in a community, such as a heritage of arts and crafts.

B. THE EDUCATION NORTH PROJECT

1. Origins

The Education North Project was initiated by the Alberta government in 1978 as a strategy for improving community life and solving some of the educational and other problems of northern Alberta communities. This project drew upon the findings of a number of surveys, reports and projects on Native education which the government had carried out in response to expressions of need by community members and educators in northern Alberta. In 1972-1973 the Task Force on Intercultural Education reported an apparent need for curriculum reforms, special language and teacher training programs, and the introduction of Native culture into school programs; and the Worth Report recommended more local responsibility for education in the North. In 1973 the Cross-Cultural Education Curriculum Committee, finding a need for local initiative and local curriculum resources, prepared some cross-cultural teaching materials. In the same year the Curriculum Branch of Alberta Education initiated a curriculum resources project to continue that work. Finally, the recommendation of the 1975 Northland Needs Assessment (Swift Report) established the climate for the establishment of Education North.

2. Organization and Objectives

The Education North Project, which the evaluators classified as a "local education society" strategy, is intended to encourage community members to work with the schools to improve educational programs for school-aged children and to help participants develop leadership skills. The local education society is a legal entity, organized under the Societies Act, which is independent of established agencies (the school and school system) yet receiving sanction and support from these agencies. The society has a special focus: skill development of participating community members. In other words, an important aspect of the project is that local people learn leadership and human relations skills so that they can contribute to their own and their community's growth and development.

The organizational structure was shaped by the following specific provisions:

a. The Minister's Advisory Committee is an inter-departmental/northern people's steering committee made up of representatives from Alberta Education, Advanced Education, the Native Secretariat, and the Northern Alberta Development Council as well as citizens of northern Alberta. The Advisory Committee establishes and funds local societies and sets broad operational guidelines for them. (The project was jointly funded under the Canada - Alberta North

Agreement between the Province of Alberta and the Department of Regional and Economic Expansion).

b. The provincial Education North office provides consultative staff to assist and advise the societies.

c. The formally organized local society is able to receive and spend public funds, independent of the local school authority.

Specific objectives of the Education North project are:

a. To develop increased parental support and community commitment to schooling by direct and active involvement in the local school's operation.

b. To implement a program to encourage long-term participation by adults in community educational activities.

c. To develop an ongoing orientation program for teachers with a view to improving teacher retention, community relations skills and classroom performance.

d. To identify, collect, develop, produce and disseminate localized educational materials.

e. To redesign aspects of curricula content if necessary.

A pre-condition for the initiation of activity in an area is the willingness of the school district, as expressed by board resolution, to participate in a project. A community and school system are considered on the basis of the following guidelines:

a. The school system delivers services to communities located within the boundaries of the Northern Alberta Development Council target area.

b. The school system delivers services to geographically dispersed communities remote from its central office.

c. The school system personnel demonstrate the capability to deliver innovative types of programs and are willing to work with other agencies to effect change.

d. The school system board demonstrates a willingness to develop policy and help to implement

programs for involvement of community people in operating the local school.

e. The school system delivers services in a community that does not have autonomous local municipal government.

f. The school system is operating a school in a community where considerable numbers of students come from homes with a low socioeconomic base.

g. The school system is operating in a community where a considerable number of the people belong to an identifiable ethnic or cultural group.

h. The school system delivers services to a community where provincial government agencies cooperate with local voluntary groups in developing and implementing social programs.

3. The Local Education Societies

Between 1979 and 1982, six local education societies were in operation, at Atikameg, Fort Chipewyan, Fort Vermilion, Lac La Biche, Little Red River and Slave Lake; a seventh, at Wabasca-Desmarais, operated for

almost two years (1979-1981). Each of these societies organized projects and activities in their schools and communities with varying degrees of success. Typical activities for both children and adults included arts and crafts (leatherwork, beading, art displays, mukluk making), cultural enrichment (music, drama, guest performers or speakers), sports (outdoor education, curling, skating, snowshoeing, fitness classes), heritage awareness (local history research, collection of local stories), improvements to the school (student newspaper, library resources, purchase of equipment) and parents in the classroom (craft instruction, recreation for lunchtime). Some communities focussed on one specific project while others operated numerous projects under the general direction of the society. Following is a brief description of the achievements and failures of each of the seven local education societies.

Atikameg. The Atikameg Society suffered a major setback during each of the three years reviewed by the Education North project evaluators. In the first year there was severe conflict among school staff members which resulted in the eventual departure of several teachers. In the second year the society experienced rapid turnover in its executive and was therefore unable to operate effectively. In the third year financial irregularities resulted in a four-month suspension of operations by the Minister of Education, who intervened according to policies established by the Advisory Committee.

These problems reflect several qualities which are not unusual in the Education North communities. Many of these communities have serious conflicts within the community and between the school and the community,

which can cause rapid turnover in teaching staff and board memberships. Furthermore, in these northern communities the unauthorized expenditure of government funds is not always viewed as unethical because with the conditions of high unemployment, people have difficulty distinguishing between welfare payments from the government and other funding by the government. The concept of volunteerism is alien, since people are not financially secure enough to think of working for no pay.

The Atikameg Society did succeed in carrying out such projects as holding potluck suppers to welcome new teachers and bring community members together, offering Cree courses for teachers, sponsoring school visits by the RCMP and Native dancers, buying school playground equipment and teaching some Native crafts as options in junior high school. However, progress was slow because of the problems mentioned.

Fort Chipewyan. The Fort Chipewyan Society had a minor bureaucratic problem in that one of the two schools in the area is under provincial authority and the other is operated by the federal government. The major project was curriculum development related to the natural history and heritage of Fort Chipewyan--flora, fauna, geology, historical artifacts and buildings, traditional skills, music, dancing, and so on. The other activities were in the general categories of arts and crafts and outdoor education.

This community also had internal conflicts which interfered with the selection of suitable leadership and resource people. In general, however, cooperation between the two schools has improved and many adults and children are actively involved in Education North activities.

Fort Vermilion. The Fort Vermilion Society concentrated on a multicultural heritage project through which community resource people offered an option program in the schools. The program was on quite a large scale initially, and this was one of its major difficulties. There were inefficiencies in conducting courses because materials ran out or resource people were not reliable. Resource people were unable to keep students busy or disciplined because of their lack of experience in the classroom situation. Also, teachers were uncertain about their roles when resource people were in the classroom, and some felt that the options were taking too much time away from the learning of basic skills.

After the initial growing pains, however, the program (in a somewhat more limited form) gained strength, and the objectives of school-community interaction and parental involvement were attained. The society had originally planned to do considerably more than it actually achieved, but learned that a narrower range of activities had a greater chance of success.

Lac La Biche. The Lac La Biche Society became a "miniature Education North office" in that it funded six sub-committees in six different centres in the Lac La Biche School Division and each sub-committee conducted its own projects. The projects (in Lac La Biche, Wandering River, Plamondon, Kikino, Caslan, and Rich Lake) included a wide range of activities for children and adults, often involving the addition of Native cultural studies to the school curriculum.

This society was quite successful, and a principal reason was that

the coordinator and the board of the society worked effectively and efficiently and were able to anticipate and take action on obstacles and difficulties before they became insurmountable problems. Also, in comparison to some of the other communities involved in the Education North project, the Lac La Biche community appeared to have a greater degree of "readiness" for implementing a local education society.

Little Red River. The Little Red River Society differed from the others in two ways:

1. The project focus was very specific--the development and production of basic readers and a book of legends, both based on traditional stories as told by members of the community.

2. The project was initially organized by educators (the superintendent of Northland School Division) and the school system continued to have a heavy involvement in the project organization.

Community members were actively involved in telling, gathering and translating stories; as artists, photographers and archivists; and as decision makers (in a group) about the contents of the readers. As a result, parents and other adults became more interested in the school's activities and acquired leadership and participation skills.

Slave Lake. The Slave Lake Society was unable to achieve many of its goals in the early stages because of conflict among different groups in the community and conflict between the first coordinator and members of the board of the society. The society's plans included a community resource inventory for teachers, a newspaper supplement on education, a speakers series, parent-teacher evenings, "Lunch Time Fun" (a recreational program for children at noon), and Block Parents activities. Some of these were society-funded, with management the responsibility of other groups, while others were society-managed. Since the society was often afflicted by serious conflicts, the society-funded projects tended to be more successful than the society-managed ones.

In 1981 a new coordinator was appointed. This coordinator is taking a strong leadership role and appears to be quite effective in bringing down some of the communication barriers between Natives and whites. As a result, the society has moved in a positive new direction, towards helping and supporting the school. Education North is now a viable program in this community.

Wabasca-Desmarais. The Wabasca-Desmarais Society failed to cope with the local politics and the many problems which exist in this community. After several attempts to get a society operating, the lack of community support, combined with mutual lack of confidence between the coordinator and the president of the board and inefficient planning and management of the society, caused the Minister of Education to terminate the project.

This experience led the evaluators to conclude that the local education society strategy has limitations and that different approaches should be tried when a community does not have the necessary attributes for successfully operating such a society.

C. THE EVALUATION OF EDUCATION NORTH

1. Evaluation Report

A team of evaluators from the University of Alberta conducted an external evaluation of the Education North project. For each community, the evaluators, E. J. Ingram and R. G. McIntosh, assisted by graduate students, assessed how successfully the project was implemented and how fully the expected outcomes were achieved. Their conclusions were based on the findings of questionnaire surveys, interviews, observations, site visits and document reviews. The evaluators concluded that the project was successfully implemented, although some of the local programs under the sponsorship of the societies did not get "off the ground". The evaluators reported that successful implementation depends on six factors:

a. Effective management of financial resources.

b. Support from, but not domination by, the local school systems.

c. Strong leadership and good relationships between the leader (coordinator) and the community.

d. At least minimal support from volunteers.

e. Choice of a strategy (and a project) suitable to the community.

f. An "opportunities" orientation instead of a "problems" orientation.

The evaluators concluded as follows about achievement of each of the expected outcomes:

Expected Outcome #1 - Increased Parental Involvement and Commitment. Parental participation increased, but change in this area has not been of such magnitude that it is easily observable by teachers and community members.

#2 - Design and Development of Localized Curriculum. There has been a moderate increase in the amount of local content taught in the schools, and parents are indicating an increased interest in having local content included in school programs. The evaluators postulated that parents are now more interested in local content because their awareness has been increased through participation in school activities.

#3 - Improved School-Community Relationships. These relationships improved in some communities but not all. In "remote" communities (those more distant from urban areas) teachers indicated less

satisfaction with school-community relationships in 1982 than they did in 1980. The opposite was true, however, in the "less remote" communities.

#4 - Development of Participation Skills. According to the data, there has been a moderate improvement in parents' feelings that they are able to influence what happens in the schools. This feeling would appear to be related to the ability to take part in decision making and discussion of issues.

#5 - Improvement in Student Achievement and Self-Image. The evaluation design did not include data on student achievement. However, in 1982 teachers reported greater satisfaction with student attendance, behavior and punctuality than they did in 1980.

In general, the evaluators found that the Education North project was moderately successful in achieving the expected outcomes, but they noted that the three-year period during which the evaluation was conducted is a rather short time in which to draw any firm conclusions. Therefore the evaluators concluded that the Education North project was as successful as could be expected over the short period of time it had to bring about changes. The evaluators stated that, on the basis of these conclusions, it would be both feasible and appropriate for the provincial government to establish a program with similar parameters and objectives to those established for the Education North pilot project.

2. Conclusions Arising Out of the Project

Accountability and Responsiveness. The provincial authority must respond to the special circumstances of the communities involved by giving the local societies considerable responsibility for decision making. At the same time the local societies must be accountable for funds provided to them by the provincial government. Although these ideals might appear to conflict, they need not.

Locus of Power in the Relationship Between School and Community. The local education societies need a considerable degree of autonomy from the school system, through funding and an officially designated role, but they also need support and encouragement from the schools. In some communities the schools have given limited support while in others the schools have tended to dominate the proceedings. Both of these approaches have negative effects.

Leadership and the Role of the Local Coordinator. The employment of "human resource professionals" (people with training in leadership skills) was deliberately avoided in this project in order to prevent domination by outside influences and to promote local initiatives and "grass roots" activities. Often, the result was organizational problems within the local societies because the people involved lacked certain essential skills. There were two problems: the pool of potential leaders is small in such communities, and such leaders are not attracted to an organization which has an imprecise mandate, as was often the case with the local education societies.

The importance of the role of the coordinator of a local education society, and his relationship with members of the community, cannot be over-emphasized. The coordinator must be sensitive to the community, able to communicate effectively, and respected by those he works with.

Since the choice of coordinator is so crucial, he/she should continue to be selected locally but with a considerable amount of assistance from provincial government consultants.

Volunteerism. Volunteerism is a middle or upper class concept which is foreign to most people in northern communities. In several communities, Education North is viewed somewhat as an industry. Therefore, a project which distributes money in the form of salaries, honoraria and other pay for services has a much better chance for success and community support than does one which depends primarily upon volunteers.

Nature of Local Involvement. The type of strategy employed should be adapted to the characteristics of the community. Some communities are capable of organizing activities without assistance from outside, while others need more advice and guidance. Similarly, the project focus may be broad or narrow according to the community's ability to set priorities and organize programs.

Community Conflict. In small communities, especially if there are different cultural groups but even when there are not, subgroup

interests must be represented and mediated. Communities where there is considerable conflict or diversity may need small funded projects managed by the subgroups instead of society-managed projects.

Opportunities Versus Problems Orientation. Successful Education North projects have tended to take an "opportunities" orientation and build on strengths in the community instead of trying to remedy weaknesses or correct negative situations. Observers and participants have reported that the success of the project can be attributed in large part to this positive approach.

D. POSSIBLE STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS IN NORTHERN COMMUNITIES

The approach used by Education North (the local education society strategy) is only one of several possible methods by which a community might build school-community relationships and increase community involvement in decision-making about educational programs. The researchers considered seven possible strategies, including the local education society, and weighed their advantages and disadvantages. Their conclusions are summarized in this section.

1. The Local Education Society Strategy

Education North used the local education society strategy. In its practical application this strategy actually evolved into two fundamental approaches--a "project specific" approach which is directed to a particular endeavor and involves participants through clearly defined tasks, and a broader "program specific" approach which involves a wide range of activities. Each approach has advantages and disadvantages, and each can be a very successful strategy if it is applied to the right set of community circumstances.

Project Focus

The Little Red River Society in the Education North project is an example of a local education society which adopted a project focus. The work of this society was characterized by a clear statement of objectives (to develop readers and a book of legends) and thorough planning and efficient management (initially by the local superintendent of schools). It emphasized task-related involvement by participants from the community; for example, telling and gathering local stories and taking photographs.

Advantages. When the local education society employs a project focus, completion of planned activities is more probable, the outcomes are easier to evaluate, communicating the intent of the project is very easy, and community interest is easy to sustain because of tangible results. The project focus also lends itself well to identifying needs for outside assistance since the task at hand is clear. In short, this approach is quite efficient; yet it does not preclude active involvement of community members and the provision of opportunities for developing enduring skills, knowledge and commitment.

Disadvantages. Although a project focus may be the best choice for communities that are not yet ready to participate actively in local decision-making, the major drawback is that this focus tends to limit local autonomy and inhibit modifications which may become necessary as the community changes. Furthermore, simply getting the project started may be a problem unless first-rate facilitative assistance is available.

Program Focus

When a local education society employs the program specific approach, it enjoys a high degree of freedom and flexibility, and a wide range of activities potentially qualify for financial support from the senior government.

Advantages. The program focus gives local people a much greater opportunity to contribute their expertise and knowledge; it encourages and supports various activities, thereby inviting larger numbers of citizens to become involved. A second major advantage is that maximum benefit can be obtained from available funds if the local society is able to judiciously support effective projects and abandon ill-conceived or floundering ones.

Disadvantages. If strong leadership is not maintained, the involvement of large numbers of people can lead to changes in priorities, reversal of decisions, uncertainty, mistrust and possible conflicts in the community. There may be a high turnover of participants and some confusion since there is not one clearly defined and specific project to which they can become committed. The freedom given to the local society may be a disadvantage as well as an advantage: it is consistently difficult to determine which projects might be most feasible and profitable, and community members whose projects are rejected may become quite critical of the society.

Note: The researchers observed that the local education societies under Education North that employed the program specific approach tended to have two types of projects--society-funded projects, which were managed by other organizations, and society-managed projects. Both types of projects seemed to be suitable, according to the situation. Once again, matching the strategy with the people involved was a crucial matter.

2. Community Schools

The community schools strategy has the same basic objective as Education North (the local education society strategy) but the approach is different. Under the community school strategy, the local school becomes a vehicle for a broader concept of education by serving everycne in the community instead of school age children only. The province issues guidelines for the establishment and operation of a community school and provides for the extra staff and resources required. The community school has the school as its focal point; the school administrative structure is the key to the strategy. The local education society, on the other hand, has much more autonomy and operates apart from the school.

The basic principles of a community school are:

a. Curriculum is related to the community.

b. Parents and community members are involved in the school.

c. The school regards parents and community members as allies (collegiality).

d. Everyone is a teacher.

e. Everyone is a learner.

f. Recreational, educational, cultural and social service agencies work together.

g. School facilities are adapted or modified to accommodate the various activities.

h. The school facilities are available for use by community agencies on an extended daily and yearly time basis.

i. It is assumed that people who live in an area know and care about each other.

Advantages. The community school strategy can avoid costly duplication of facilities and services and permit greater use of the special skills and knowledge which community members may have. It can help eliminate alienation and apathy by permitting democratic management, and

it can increase community pride and concern for others who live in the area. School-age children can be enriched, both during and after school, through local content and a greater range of curricular and co-curricular activities. Finally, the presence of other parents and adults in the school provides additional role models for children.

Disadvantages. Practical problems can occur as a result of sharing facilities. Secured files can be vulnerable, organizational systems may be incompatible, life expectancy of equipment is reduced, more staff is required, and staggered hours are necessary. If the necessary resources and staff are not carefully planned for, overuse of equipment and excessive workloads can easily occur. Because roles and responsibilities are shared, they may become unclear. Further, lay persons' involvement may cause serious conflicts, especially if lines of authority are not clearly delineated or if the lay participants lack organizational skills.

3. The Local Control Strategy

Under the local control strategy a great deal of the responsibility for school governance is placed on the local community. All decisions are made locally except for broadly defined educational aims and objectives and the normal financial management requirements. The local control strategy is different from the local education society strategy (Education North) in that the community has the power to make educational decisions, rather than the opportunity to offer advice to educational authorities. Of course, professional and community interests must be kept in a reasonable balance. At first glance, it may seem that the re-

sponsibility and authority of the professional educator would decrease under this strategy, but in fact this seems not to happen in situations where local control has been successfully implemented.

Advantages. Under this strategy the parents and community members are truly the clients of the school. Like the local education society strategy and other strategies described here, the local control strategy helps to narrow the gap between home and school and increase parental involvement in school activities. This strategy can provide for different local needs and expectations, and schools can respond more quickly to changing circumstances. There could be greater financial and administrative efficiency under this approach. Also, since local people choose the staff, disruptive teacher turnover could be reduced.

Disadvantages. The local control strategy is vulnerable to domination by a single interest group. Even if this does not occur, undue politicization of the educational system is a danger as well. Domination by the professional staff is a common occurrence if the community is not prepared to accept the responsibilities involved. (When there are cultural and/or language differences between the community and the professional staff, the role of the professional becomes especially crucial.)

The local governing body runs the risk of being just as irrelevant as a more centralized authority; much of its success depends on effective two-way communication with the community. If and when lay people take on governing and leadership duties, as the strategy requires that they do,

"role shock" frequently occurs; that is, the lay people experience a sense of failure and inadequacy because others do not accept their new role behaviors as appropriate.

4. The Curriculum Development Resource Centre

The curriculum development resource centre strategy is directed specifically towards bridging the cultural gap between the community and an imported curriculum. Bridging this gap is an especially important concern in communities having large numbers of Native students, but the curriculum requirements of all northern communities are considerably different from those of large urban centres.

The curriculum development resource centre strategy involves developing a centre of materials, technical aids and personnel that reflect the community's ideas of what the local curriculum should incorporate. These resources are made available to the schools and other agencies in the community.

The most obvious strength of this strategy is its reliance upon the local community for resource development. Secondly, the objectives are clearly community-derived.

The major problem with this strategy is that there is a danger of developing materials which are lacking in quality and are therefore not used.

5. The Consulting and Facilitating Strategy

The consulting and facilitating strategy involves a superordinate organization (such as the provincial government) sending a person or a team to consult with a client group (such as a northern community) in order to fulfill a need, solve a problem, or reach a goal. Although the client group needs help, it is expected to do some of the work and to learn from the experience so that its expertise will be greater the next time such a problem or need arises.

This strategy differs somewhat from other community development strategies in that the community has a definite goal, and the superordinate organization concurs both with that goal and with the strategy for reaching it. The consultant or field worker has the job of making a system work. This responsibility for specific results or outcomes takes priority over community development, although community development may occur concurrently.

Advantages. The supervising organization might consider this strategy advantageous because it allows a considerable degree of control over the direction of events. The advantage for the field worker or consultant is that he knows his task and to whom he is responsible. The client group, or the community, has the advantage of knowing who to ask for help. This strategy encourages the utilization of local resources, human and otherwise, and because work is done at the scene of the problem, there is less chance of an irrelevant solution.

Disadvantages. The weaknesses of this strategy are that the system is somewhat predefined and inflexible, the strategy can easily become paternalistic and dependency-generating, and what can be done may tend to be limited by organizational structures and by the larger organization's needs and demands. The field worker's personality and ability are crucial; personal biases on his part can be a danger.

Practical problems can occur with this strategy. The needs of a community may be greater or fewer at different times and these fluctuations are difficult to accommodate. In a large geographical area, transportation and communication costs can be very high. As well, turnover of field workers might be heavy, since the job requires constant travel.

6. Community Development

The community development strategy is directed towards achieving goals in groups rather than as individuals. This strategy tries to involve people in changing some aspect of local custom. The "system" is considered to exist in order to serve people, and not the other way around. Also, informal learning is stressed, whereas many community programs consider only formal learning processes.

In this strategy, the community development worker is a central figure. This person must have technical skill, commitment, cultural empathy, a sense of politics, and organizational ability.

Advantages. The major advantage of the community development process is its tendency to promote social and individual growth: human and other resources are shared, unrecognized or unused talents are tapped, and individuals develop social and participatory skills.

Disadvantages. The central role of the community development worker can be a negative or positive factor, depending on the type of person who is chosen and how well he does the job. The community development worker has a role which cannot be taught but must be learned. There is a danger of the worker becoming a scapegoat or a savior, both of which are undesirable.

Since "cooperation in change" is a difficult process, it is difficult to measure how much progress is being made. Furthermore, the community development worker and his clients may disagree about goals and about what the situation requires.

7. Adult Education

The adult education strategy seeks to rectify inequalities of educational opportunity (which commonly exist in remote northern communities). The basic idea behind this strategy is that educated persons can make a greater contribution to society and that society benefits from the educational and personal growth of individuals. A successful adult education program must be responsive to local and individual needs, avoid restrictive entry critieria, and create an atmosphere of sharing and participation rather than competition.

Advantages. This strategy, which takes a positive view of the concept of lifelong learning, attempts to rectify inequalities by making up for lost or missed educational opportunities. Since the strategy promotes a more positive attitude towards education among adults, one by-product is often improved home and school relationships. An adult education program is easily adaptable to divergent individual and local needs, and it can serve to increase community awareness and sense of purpose.

Disadvantages. Adult education programs may tend to separate adult learning and isolate it from the mainstream educational process. The programs may be costly and/or impractical because the communities involved are remote and have quite divergent needs, expectations and demands (often within the same community). The danger of drop-outs is high in adult education, and the result is a waste of resources. It is also difficult to staff programs in the more remote areas.

E. CHOOSING A SUITABLE STRATEGY FOR A PARTICULAR COMMUNITY

Study has shown that there are three dimensions to each of the strategies for building school-community relationships:

1. Degree of relationship to the formal educational system.

2. Degree to which the strategy takes a broad (program specific) approach or a narrow (project specific) approach, and

3. Degree to which provincial or other external authorities control the strategy.

Through various combinations of these three dimensions, variations on the basic strategies can be created. Each resulting strategy will give the local project a certain degree of autonomy, ranging from low to high.

For example, if a community school with a parent advisory committee is funded to develop a set of grade three readers focusing on local content, and Alberta Education provides a great deal of consultative as-

sistance, monitors the project closely and requires pre- and post-audits, the strategy has low autonomy. On the other hand, if funds are given to a broadly based community group with few or no ties with the local school system, and they are allowed to conduct any type of program which will enhance parental interest and involvement in their own and their children's education, and little provincial control is exercised except for a post-audit for financial accountability, the strategy has high autonomy.

Reviews of the literature and the evaluation of the Education North project have indicated that the type of strategy chosen should be related carefully to the type of community being served. If the community is judged to be low in "readiness" for citizen participation in educational programming, the strategy should involve (1) close association with the school and school system, (2) a specific project focus, and (3) considerable external monitoring and built-in controls for the program. If the community is judged to have a greater degree of "readiness", the strategy chosen should accordingly move along the continuum towards (1) independence from the school and school system, (2) a broad program focus, and (3) minimum external intervention.

Some communities might have characteristics which indicate a strategy which has high autonomy in one of the three dimensions but low autonomy in others. For example, a local education society could have a high level of association with the school but have a broad and wide-ranging program focus and little intervention by provincial authorities.

The researchers concluded that the readiness of a community could be assessed in terms of three factors:

1. Ability to set high and yet attainable goals.

2. Willingness and ability to assume responsibilities.

3. Education, skill and expertise regarding participation in educational programming and decision-making.

The system for determining readiness need not be complex or elaborate. A check list related to the following factors would probably be sufficient: (1) the past record of the community in such activities, (2) the relationship between the community and the school, (3) relationships within the community, (4) levels of appropriate skills and motivation in the community, (5) the level of community pride, and (6) aspirations of the community.

In conclusion, strategies which are directed towards (1) adult involvement and participation in educational programs and (2) increased development and use of community resources in educational programs have been judged to be worthwhile and capable of success. Ongoing programs of this nature are feasible and appropriate.

If such programs are established, selecting a strategy appropriate

to a given community's characteristics is extremely important. Policies governing the operation of such programs must be flexible to allow for different needs.

It should be noted as well that the strategies chosen may have to be modified during the course of a project. Since a major purpose of the program is to raise the readiness level of the community, the strategy should change as the community changes.

F. DEVELOPING A POLICY AND PROGRAM FOR BUILDING SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS--RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluators of the Education North project concluded that the project was as successful as could be expected in view of the short period of time it had to reach its objectives. On the basis of this conclusion, the evaluators stated that it would be both feasible and appropriate for the provincial government to establish an ongoing program with parameters and objectives similar to those established for the Education North project, but allowing some choice from among the several strategies described earlier in this summary.

1. Goals and Objectives. The goals of the recommended program would be to develop an educational system with the following characteristics: sensitivity and responsiveness to community needs and opportunities, involvement of adults in the educational program, increased relevance of education to its clients, and general improvement in the quality of the educational experiences of both children and adults. The objectives of the provincial program would be to pursue this goal by funding and supporting local programs which have as their objectives (1) adult involvement and participation in educational programs and (2) increased the development and use of community resources in educational programs.

2. Location. Although the recommended program would be appropriate anywhere in the province, because of the costs involved the government may wish to limit the program to northern Alberta, where the problems of relevance and alienation are most acute.

3. Eligibility. Any community in the area served by the program should be eligible to participate. The only criterion should be that it is a functioning community. Criteria such as the presence of a school and the approval of the school system should only be considered in approving the type of program, not for eligibility to participate.

   If financial concerns require that the scope of the program be limited, the larger communities, where the problems are less acute or where other resources are more available, could be assigned lower priority.

4. Funding. On the basis of the experience of Education North and assuming that the scope of the program will be expanded, an annual budget of at least $1.5 million would probably be required to operate the program. Although a maximum figure might have to be set for funding any one project, there should be no minimum level because some communities may require only a small amount of "seed money" to get started or to see them through a difficult phase.

5. Design and Operation of the Program. Experience suggests that because of the variations in communities, and the importance of matching strategies to these variations, a flexible set of policies

is required to govern the operation of the program. For example, any community group, including the school, should be eligible to initiate the process by applying for participation in the program. Other requirements such as establishing a society, involving the school, and having broad representation on the governing board should be a matter for determination in the discussions leading to selection of an appropriate strategy for a particular community.

The program should use the framework described in section E of this summary to determine the level of readiness of the community and consequently the most appropriate strategy. The level of funding and the time span of the project would have to be based on the nature of the project and the strategy selected. Development of the project and strategy naturally would involve both the local community and the project staff.

6. Management. A team within the new Program Development Division of Alberta Education should be established to develop the details of the program, the pilot investigation having already been carried out by the Planning and Research Branch through the Education North project. Implementation of the program could be the responsibility of a coordinator housed in the Special Programs branch of the Program Delivery Division. An advisory steering committee, consisting of representatives from cooperating departments and northern communities, could be established to provide advice and feedback to the program staff and to approve proposals. The local projects could be serviced by staff located in the appropriate Regional Offices--Grande Prairie and Edmonton.

The receipt and consideration of proposals, determinations of the level of readiness of communities, selection or development of an appropriate strategy, and the framing of recommendations to the advisory committee could be done by a task group consisting of the program coordinator, appropriate regional office staff members and selected others who either know the community in question or understand the social processes involved.

In conclusion, the policies for governing the proposed program should be broad and flexible. They call for a great deal of discretion to be granted to the program staff and advisory committee, but they also provide a model to guide the decisions of program personnel. The nature of the program and the variation in communities demand this type of flexible framework.